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Secretary Spellings and Russian Education and Science Minister Fursenko Sign New Higher Education Memorandum of Understanding

Promotes institutional partnerships and student and scholar exchanges

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Secretary Margaret Spellings and Russian Education and Science Minister Andrei Fursenko today signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the U.S. Department of Education and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation on expanding cooperation and exchanges in the field of education. This Memorandum of Understanding is the first of its kind between the U.S. Department of Education and the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation.

"Our countries must work together to ensure all students have critical 21st century skills," said Secretary Spellings. "The Memorandum of Understanding we just signed is a symbol of our shared commitment to improving education and promoting exchanges between our countries."

Education is a value that both countries share, and the two countries face the common challenge of ensuring every child receives a quality education and has the skills to succeed in the global economy. Up to 5,000 Russian and American students and scholars have participated in exchange programs such as Fulbright and Fulbright-Hays over the last four decades, and this commitment will strengthen this cooperation in the 21st century.

The U.S. Department of Education and the Russian Ministry of Education and Science initiated the new Memorandum of Understanding to expand cooperation and develop partnerships among various types of educational institutions in the United States and Russia that reflect the best practices of the educational systems of both countries. This collaboration supplements existing programs, including exchange programs, and promotes the creation of new programs in accordance with the future development of mutual relations.

A focus on math, science, information technology, and foreign language study is a high priority. The Russian Ministry will provide funding for the direct use of the Russian partners and the U.S. Department of Education provides funding for the direct use of the United States partners. The Memorandum of Understanding also forms a working group to improve education in both countries and to foster new partnerships and exchanges in the future. These partnerships are designed to support the role of universities in building the innovation society.

This Memorandum of Understanding follows on the meetings in Bratislava in February 2005 where President Putin of the Russian Federation and President Bush committed to pursue a number of initiatives that will make the two countries and their citizens safer and more prosperous. The Presidents issued joint statements on three matters including affirming their commitment to strengthening contacts between our societies and the citizens of our two countries by increasing the number of students, teachers, scientists, cultural workers, business people, and people from various professions who participate in bilateral exchange programs. This initiative will strengthen long-term institutional ties between academic and exchange organizations, will promote mutual understanding, and will prepare the next generation of leaders on both sides for the challenges of the 21st century.

More information about the U.S. Department of Education, the *No Child Left Behind Act*, and U.S. Higher Education is available at www.ed.gov.

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